



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY

James M. Thomas
Commissioner

TO: All Chief Elected Officials

FROM: Commissioner *James M. Thomas*
Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

DATE: December 9, 2005

RE: **Evacuation and Mass Shelter Planning**

Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita last fall, both the President and Congress ordered the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to undertake an immediate review of catastrophic emergency plans in every state. As part of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2006, Congress directed DHS to report on mass evacuation planning in all 50 states by no later than February 10, 2006.

To that end, the DHS issued Bulletin No. 197, dated November 23, 2005, which directs all states to develop evacuation and mass shelter plans, and submit them to the federal agency by no later than January 17, 2006. **In that Bulletin, DHS states that submittal of these plans is a prerequisite for receipt of all FY 2006 DHS Homeland Security Grant funds.**

Fortunately, in Connecticut this planning process has already begun. In November, Governor Rell directed the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) to work in conjunction with the Departments of Public Safety and Transportation to develop evacuation and mass shelter plans for Connecticut. State officials have met several times with representatives from the Fire and Police Chief's Associations, as well as police chiefs from each of the five (5) DEMHS planning regions to discuss evacuation planning, traffic management, and develop a process for meeting the extremely aggressive deadline set by the federal DHS. All participants agreed to approach evacuation and mass shelter planning at a regional level. DEMHS has established five new planning regions and the DOT was able to fit most of their Regional Planning Agencies (RPOs) within those boundaries. The new DEMHS regions become effective as of January 1, 2006, but it was agreed that we would use them now, for planning purposes (see map attached.)

At the local level, DEMHS Area Coordinators have begun reviewing each municipality's evacuation and sheltering plans. The Area Coordinators are in the process of tabulating local shelter locations and bed capacity, and they will be collecting local Hazard Assessments from municipalities. They are also collecting data on the "special needs" populations from Emergency Management Directors, as well as information on local transportation assets.

There are three scenarios driving this planning process, which include:

- A Category 3 hurricane hitting the Connecticut coast and all of New England;
- A Millstone Power Plant release of contamination; and,
- A large scale terrorist attack in New York City.

As you know, the Millstone Power Plant has a well developed evacuation and shelter plan, entitled "Connecticut Radiological Emergency Response Plan", and that plan will not be altered as part of this initiative.

At the regional level, we are establishing five Regional Evacuation Planning Teams (REPT), which will be comprised of an RPO transportation planner, a DEMHS regional planner, a representative from local emergency management, fire, police, EMS, the Red Cross, a chief elected official, an advocate for the developmentally disabled, and the private sector. Each REPT will be chaired by one of the five DEMHS Area Coordinators.

The REPTs are just now forming and will begin their work within the week. They will conduct a regional hazard analysis; identify all shelter locations in their region along with their bed capacity and identify whether they are long or short term shelters. In many areas of the state, sheltering in place will be the preferred method of safe guarding the public's safety.

I know that you will support the local, regional and state-level efforts to meet the DHS deadline. We look forward to working with you over the coming weeks and months.

JMT/mk

cc: Local Emergency Management Directors
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